CONSTITUTION

OF THE

NEW-JERSEY SOCIETY

FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF

VICE AND IMMORALITY,

AND FOR

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF

VIRTUE AND GOOD MORALS,

AS ADOPTED AT THE MEETING WHICH ESTABLISHED THE SOCIETY,

In Trenton, November 11th, 1817.

NEW-BRUNSWICK:

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1818.

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Agreeably to public notice, a number of persons from different parts of the state met at Trenton, on the 11th day of November, 1817, for the purpose of forming a State Society for the suppression of vice and promotion of good morals: Joshua M. Wallace, Esq. was appointed *Chairman*, and J. W. Scott, Esq. *Secretary*.

The committee appointed for that purpose, presented a draft of a constitution for the Society, which being amended, was adopted.

The following gentlemen were appointed officers of the Society for the ensuing year:

JOSHUA M. WALLACE, Esq. *President.*

Gen. JOHN BEATTY, Rev. SIMON WILMER, JOHN FRELINGHUYSEN, Esq. JOSEPH C. HORNBLOWER, Esq. and Rev. LEVERETT I. F. HUNTINGTON, *Vice-Presidents.*

Joseph W. Scott, Esq. *Secretary.*—Charles Rice, Esq. *Treasurer.*

Managers.

Rev. Wilhelmus Elting,	Hon. Jesse Upson,
Rev. Asa Hillyer,	Job S. Halstead, Esq.
Rev. John F. Clark,	Samuel Bayard, Esq.
Ercuries Beatty, Esq.	Dr. Samuel Forman,
Rev. John Cornell,	Charles Ogden, Esq.
Daniel Garrison, Esq.	Rev. Jonathan Freeman,
Rev. Ambrose Ogden,	George Haywood, jun. Esq.
Robert M'Neely, Esq.	Gen. James Giles,
Henry Van Arsdalen, Esq.	Rev. George S. Woodhull,
Rev. Isaac V. Brown,	Rev. David Comfort,
Rev. Samuel B. How,	Isaac W. Crane, Esq.
Rev. William C. Schenck,	Benjamin Smith, Esq.
Theodore Frelinghuysen, Esq.	Samuel J. Read, Esq.
Dr. John Van Cleve,	Rev. John M'Dowell,
Andrew Howell, Esq.	Charles Ewing, Esq.

Dr. John T. Woodhull

CONSTITUTION.

I. THIS Society shall be called the "New-Jersey Society for the suppression of vice and immorality, and for the encouragement of virtue and good morals.

II. A principal object of the Society shall be, to carry into full effect the laws of the state against vice and immorality, by aiding the civil authorities.

III. Every member of the Society shall consider himself as pledged to use his influence and exertions in the attainment of this object.

IV. The Society, and all its members, shall endeavour to prevent vice, rather than to punish it; and with this view shall, as far as practicable, give warning to those who violate law, so that opportunity may be given, to prevent punishment by reformation.

V. The Society, as far as practicable, shall diffuse among the people a knowledge of those things which the laws of the state prohibit, and of the penalties which they inflict.

VI. It shall be the duty of the members of the Society to use their endeavours to form Auxiliary Associations, in different parts of the state.

VII. The Society shall meet annually on the first Tuesday of November; the first annual meeting

to be held at Trenton, and each meeting shall fix the place where the subsequent meeting shall be held. The Society may also meet at any other time and place to which it may regularly adjourn.

VIII. The Officers of this Society shall consist of a President, five Vice Presidents, a Treasurer, Secretary, and thirty-one Managers, who shall be annually chosen by the society, conduct its ordinary business, and annually report their proceedings to the Society; seven of whom shall be necessary to constitute a quorum in the board; provided always, that of these seven, the President or a Vice-President shall be one. These officers shall perform the duties usually appertaining to the offices which they hold, and such others as may be specified in the bye-laws, or assigned by special votes or orders of the society.

IX. Any person who shall agree to pay to the Treasurer the sum of *twenty-five cents* annually, shall be a member of the Society.

X. In no cases shall legal coercion be resorted to, except those in which persuasion, admonition, and other mild measures, are found ineffectual.

ADDRESS,

PREPARED AND PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

To the Inhabitants of the State of New-Jersey.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

THE constitution of a Society, recently formed in this state, for the suppression of vice, and the promotion of good morals is now offered to your consideration. We respectfully and earnestly request you to examine this constitution with care and attention; and to receive with candour a few suggestions, with which we have thought proper to accompany it.

Some partial attempts have heretofore been made, in this state, to aid in enforcing the laws against vice and immorality. These attempts have failed because they were partial. We hope for success in the attempt now made; because we trust that it will not be partial but general. We hope that this Society will ultimately embody the virtue, talents, and influence of the whole state; and, if this hope shall be realized, our attempt under the smiles of Heaven, which will assuredly rest upon it, cannot fail of success.

What reasonable objection can be offered against such an association as we have formed, and in which we solicit your co-operation? Nay, what one consideration is there, which should influence a

citizen, or a christian, that does not recommend it to your favour and patronage? Will any say that it reflects on the inhabitants of the state, as if they were more vicious than their neighbors? The opposite conclusion is the only fair one. Extreme corruption of morals, would not leave virtue enough to form such an association as ours. Our institution does indeed imply that vice exists, but demonstrates also that it is not dominant. Our attempt will be highly honourable to the state—It will constitute its best praise—It will show that the embodied influence, of the religious and moral part of the state has been arrayed on the side of virtue. Nor is this all. The example may be highly beneficial and extensively influential. Recollect that the institution of a single Bible Society, in one of our cities, led in a short time, to a multitude of similar institutions, throughout our whole country, and has issued in a noble NATIONAL SOCIETY, which promises incalculable benefit to millions, who were destitute of the knowledge of revealed truth. New-Jersey is the thoroughfare of the United States. She is a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. And if the success of our attempt should be apparent, it may lead to associations of a like kind, in every part of the Union, and the ultimate benefit may be beyond all estimate.

Will any object to the trouble, time and expense, which an efficient prosecution of the objects of the association will require? The demand of trouble,

time and expense, made on any individual who joins our Society, will not be as great, as what the friends of dissipation cheerfully bestow, in violating some of the laws which we seek to enforce ; in injuring all those precious interests which we unite to promote. And will not the friends of good morals be as active, and as liberal in doing good, as the friends of immorality are in doing evil ? To state the question is to ensure the right answer to it, in every virtuous mind ; and to ensure the emotion with which the answer ought to be returned. Those who feel the love, either of God or man, will cheerfully bestow all the trouble, time, or expense necessary to perform their part, in the suppression of vice and promotion of good morals.

Will any remark that the Society are invading the province of the civil magistrate ? We reply that a leading part of our plan is to encourage and assist every faithful magistrate, in the state to which we belong. If there are magistrates, who are not faithful, can any good citizen be unwilling that they should be directly prompted to their duty ; or, that their deficiencies should be supplied by lawful voluntary exertions of virtuous citizens ? We think not. And how great encouragement will it afford, to any upright and conscientious magistrate to find himself countenanced and supported by the most worthy part of the community ? Will it be said that the society will trespass on the rights of conscience ?

They do not understand what conscienee is, who think it eonsists in liberty to perpetrate vice and praetiee immoralities. Conscience is the guard of virtue, not of viee. In opposing what all admit to be vieious, or injurious to society, no mans eonscience ean be violated; and this soeiety pledge themselves to oppose nothing else. In a word, it seems to be too obvious for argument, that every good eitizen ought to endeavor, by all lawful and proper means, to aid in the exeeution of wholesome laws, to discourage viee and to promote good morals. The Soeiety have certainly in view no other end or object than this; and they do therefore confidently hope that the mass of virtuous eitizens, in every part of the state, will eome forward with spirit and aid their endeavours.

It is a melancholy fact, that the laws in regard to viee and immorality, are in many instances grossly and habitually violated and disregarded. It does appear to us, that it is a saered duty, incumbent on every good eitizen, to endeavour to remedy this evil. It does appear to us, that the violation and disregard referred to, are extremely injurious, and even reproachful, and that eonsiderations of the highest and most powerful kind, call loudly on every citizen, and every Christian, to do his part towards producing a general reformation.

We have made it a conspieuous part of our constitution, and we here repeat it, that we never wish

or desire, that even notorious offenders should be taken and punished by surprise; or that they should be punished at all, if warning, admonition, persuasion and entreaty will reclaim them. We wish to be instrumental in punishing no one: our wish is to prevent punishment, by preventing the crimes on which the law denounces it, and by reclaiming the offenders who have exposed themselves to it. It is only in the last resort, after all gentle means, and benevolent exertions have been fully tried, and tried in vain, that we would be instrumental in laying the penalty of the laws on obstinate and irreclaimable transgressors. But in such cases, to suffer the laws to be trampled on and despised, is not kindness to individuals, or to the community; it is cruelty to both.

Permit us, fellow citizens, now to recommend, that associations be formed throughout the state, in towns, villages, townships, or in such districts, however bounded and limited, as shall be most convenient, for the purpose of carrying into effect the design of our institution. We know that these associations should be regularly organized, that they may act with efficiency; that, in addition to their officers, they should have an acting committee; that it should be the duty of the members generally, and of the committee specially, to carry into effect every part of the contemplated design—to encourage all institutions favorable to the promotion of good morals, by whatever name they may be called, or whatever may be their immediate object—to explain and

recommend the views of the Society, and engage in its behalf the co-operation of all good men—to warn, advise, counsel and persuade the known violators of the law to desist from such violations—to lay before them every consideration and motive that may have this tendency, and if, after suitable forbearance, it shall appear that reformation does not take place, then to aid in executing the law with vigilance and firmness. The odium which is usually attached to those who are often stigmatized as informers, will thus be prevented, when all mild means shall have been previously used, to reform transgressors, and when it is seen that men of established character, honour and virtue, are concerned in giving the necessary information, and in aid of the necessary process for their correction and reformation ; especially when it is seen, that such men act in concert, and will support each other, and countenance the magistrate.

Many minor points and modifications of the plans of these associations, will of course be disposed of by each as circumstances may require ; and certain things may no doubt be done by some, and waived by others, with propriety. But we wish it may be distinctly perceived and remembered, that the whole efficiency of our institution, will depend on the formation of these associations, and on their acting with spirit, prudence and perseverance. We therefore take the liberty to urge their immediate formation in as many places as possible.

Fellow Citizens—We have performed our duty—it remains with you to perform yours. We trust that you will perform it. And if you do, it cannot otherwise happen, than that great good to the community, and great benefit to yourselves will be the result. Let us remember that all our success will eventually depend on the divine blessing. Let us earnestly implore it, and we may reasonably and confidently expect that it will not be withheld.

And in conclusion, we tenderly call upon all those who are in the habit of profaning that day, devoted by all Christian denominations to religious worship, upon profane swearers, men of intemperance, and those who openly violate the laws of our country and corrupt the public morals, by horse-racing and gambling, and the abettors of crime and disorder of every kind—to pause, and consider what must be the result of such practices and habits, to themselves and to the community. By the regard which all men owe to their own well being, and to that of the community, we entreat you to turn from such evil ways, to lay down these weapons of rebellion against civil government, social order, domestic enjoyment, and true piety; that you may thus become good citizens, and secure true honour and felicity to yourselves and others, by a life of well doing.

JOSHUA M. WALLACE, *President.*

J. W. SCOTT, *Secretary.*